

1. A method of encoding a video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the method employing both non-temporal prediction and temporal prediction, wherein the method comprises, for each picture that forms a reference picture for the temporal prediction of another picture, associating with each such picture an indicator indicating the temporal order of the reference picture in the encoded video signal relative to the other reference pictures in the encoded video signal.
2. A method according to claim 1 further comprising incrementing the indicator each time a reference picture is encoded.
3. A method according to claim 2 further comprising incrementing the indicator by one each time a reference picture is encoded.
4. A method according to any preceding claim wherein the indicator is included in a picture header.
5. A method according to claim 3 wherein the video signal is encoded according to the H.263 standard and the indicator is included in the Supplemental Enhancement Information.
6. A method of decoding an encoded video signal representing a sequence of pictures, the method comprising receiving an encoded video signal, decoding each received picture, examining for each picture to be decoded that forms a reference picture for another picture an indicator representing the temporal order of a reference frame and, when the indicator does not follow consecutively from an immediately preceding decoded reference frame, detecting a lost reference frame.
7. A method according to claim 6 further comprising sending a request to a transmitter to encode a picture in a non-temporal manner when the indicator

does not follow consecutively from an immediately preceding decoded reference frame.

8. An encoded video signal wherein for each picture that forms a  
5 reference picture for the temporal prediction of another picture, an indicator is associated with each such reference picture indicating the temporal order of the reference pictures in the encoded video stream.

9. A video encoder comprising an input for receiving a video signal  
10 representing a sequence of pictures and for generating encoded pictures, said encoder being arranged to employ both non-temporal prediction and temporal prediction, wherein the encoder is arranged, for each picture that forms a reference picture for the temporal prediction of another picture, to associate with each reference picture an indicator indicating the temporal order of the  
15 reference picture in the encoded video signal relative to other reference pictures in the encoded video signal.

10. A video encoder according to claim 9 further comprising means for  
incrementing the indicator each time a reference picture is encoded.  
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11. A video decoder comprising an input for receiving an encoded video  
signal representing a sequence of pictures, a decoder for decoding each  
received picture, the decoder being arranged to examine for each picture to  
be decoded that forms a reference picture for another picture an indicator  
25 representing the temporal order of a reference frame and, when the indicator does not follow consecutively from an immediately preceding decoded reference frame, to detect a lost reference frame.

12. A portable radio communications device including an encoder  
30 according to claim 9 or 10 and/or a decoder according to claim 11.